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Front Page      Edit Page      Other Page

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## So That's How Censorship Works

President Kennedy got little comfort from his White House meeting last week with U. S. editors and publishers, arranged at the request of the newspapermen after his bid for self-censorship two weeks ago. Nor, in the light of recent events, did he deserve any.

For the press as a whole has been a great deal more responsible on security questions than the government itself. The disaster in Cuba well illustrates the point.

It is clear now that the U. S. government through the Central Intelligence Agency planned, financed, and armed the rebel invaders. More than that, in the final days before the ill-fated venture took off for Cuba, CIA officials actually had locked up the Cuban refugee leaders and put out distorted information in their name.

As the venture began, U. S. reporters at Miami were told by the CIA that this was an invasion involving some 5,000 men, a propaganda step taken to persuade Cubans that it was safe to rise up and support the invading forces.

When the actual landings—made by perhaps 1,000 men at the outside—started to bog down, reporters got the word that only 200 to 400 men were being landed to deliver supplies to anti-Castro guerrillas. The invasion angle was deliberately played down to minimize the U. S. defeat.

In each case the press was being

misled—lied to, to put it bluntly—by the government for the government's own purpose. And who was fooled by all this official cleverness? Only 180 million Americans; Fidel Castro and his Russian friends knew very well what the truth was.

The trouble with the press on such a misbegotten enterprise as the Cuban affair, as James Reston of the New York Times said the other day, was that it said too little rather than too much.

Many newsmen knew or suspected weeks ago that this was a CIA operation in spite of the official denials; they knew that U. S. prestige was being entrusted, after much fumbling and indecision, to a band of squabbling Cuban refugees. The press failed to say so flatly because much of this information was "secret."

If Americans generally had known a week before the invasion what was coming off, aroused public opinion might have saved us much embarrassment.

If this is a sample of how the President's proposed self-censorship would work, the press knows by now that neither the nation nor the press can afford it.